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AUTHOR Palmer, William P.
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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the policies and practices of school inspection in Nigeria. The first section discusses the school inspection system from 1954 to 1967. In 1954, Nigeria was given a new constitution which divided the country into regions, each of which was responsible for education in its own area. School inspection was managed on a regional basis, with a mixed record of idealism, efficiency, and ineffectiveness. The next section considers school inspection after the splitting of Nigeria into many small states in 1967. One of the major problems inspectors faced was inappropriate, outdated, or non-existent education law. To date the country's education law has still not been made uniform or centralized. Next, patterns of educational administration are discussed. The country's two basic forms of school administration are identified with the two sources of the Nigerian educational system, and differ in the degree to which control is held by state or local officials. Finally, the role of the Federal Ministry of Education and the Federal Inspectorate is described. Federal and State inspectors have different roles, with Federal inspectors less involved in administration and more involved in classroom evaluation. Relations between the two levels have generally been good. (CG)

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A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF SCHOOL INSPECTION IN NIGERIA

by

William P. Palmer
Goroka Teachers' College, University of Papua, New Guinea

Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Australian Comparative and International Education Society (11th, Hamilton, New Zealand, 21-24 August, 1983).

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF SCHOOL INSPECTION IN NIGERIA

W.P. PALMER

BACKGROUND

I find the Study of school inspection in different countries interesting partly because it was my job for five years, but also because in the study of this topic one must look at the whole educational system of the country as well as the day to day work of the individual inspector. I find this in many ways similar to the way in which the chemist looks at chemical reactions on the "macro" and atomic levels in quick succession Bereday[2] comments on this change in focus pointing out the value of the 'wider angle of vision' whilst the knowledge of the typical type of interaction between the individual inspector and teacher gives direction to abstract ideas.

Nigeria is a large West African State about three times the size of the United Kingdom and a population probably in excess of 80 million. Comparatively few A.C.I.E.S. members would have had direct experience of Nigeria, but if members were suddenly transported there, they would find many features of the Education System familiar to them. The reason for this is that the Nigerian educational system is largely a legacy of the British Colonial system, which until recently had seemed almost immune to change. The implementation of Universal Primary Education throughout Nigeria in April, 1975 was followed in 1977 by the announcement of a new educational plan[3].

The policies laid down in the document are being implemented and the landmarks of the colonial educational structure such as the five year secondary course leading to School Certificate are gradually changing.

For descriptions of the system as it wa s A.C.I.E.S members will find books by L.J. Lewis[4] and Babs Fafunwa[5] very helpful but they are both now somewhat dated. Bray's[6] book and the book by Ozigi and Ocho[7] both deal largely with the

UD 024 664

North of Nigeria but do also give a more recent overall perspective.

SCHOOL INSPECTION IN NIGERIA IN THE REGIONS 1954-1967

In Nigeria some school inspectors have been civil servants, visiting schools in order to determine the amount of the government grant, whilst others have been missionaries attempting to assess the quality of the religious education given. Both types of Inspector have been familiar to Nigerians since 1980 or even earlier in the case of the missionary supervisors.

However, organised inspectorates whose inspectors act as a team to perform their five-fold role are a more recent innovation. This role, described by Palmer[8] is that of fact finding, assessment, giving advice, motivating and inspiring teachers, and carrying out administrative duties.

In 1954 Nigeria was given a new constitution which divided Nigeria into three regions, the Northern Region, the Western Region, and the Eastern Region each of which was responsible for Education in its own area. The Western Region Government which had education as a top priority, introduced Free Universal Primary Education(UPE), promulgated laws which were very similar to the 1944 Education Act(UK), and for the supervision of the education system founded an inspectorate in 1956 which was to be similar in function and prestige to that of Her Majesty's Inspectorate(UK). According to Burns[9] the Western Region inspectorate was the second modern inspectorate in Africa, the first being founded in Kenya in 1955. Details of the planning of UPE, and the creation and functioning of the Western Region Inspectorate can be found in the writings of Crookall[10], Herrington[11], and Thorburn[12]. What is remarkable about all these accounts in the sense of idealism which pervades them, and this idealism may have helped to overcome some of the tremendous problems which the rapidly expanding educational system faced. The Inspectorate policy as described by Herrington[13] was to encourage inspectors to be the teachers' "guides, counsellors and friends"

with the emphasis being on an advisory role for inspectors. This is remarkable in a country where the school inspector is usually considered a tyrant and a bully, typified by Solarin's[14] account of an elderly inspector who says "I have no patience for such schools, I simply close them". The Western Region inspectorate ran courses for teachers for some years and appeared to have been extremely active, but shortages of inspectors and an increasing school population must have taken their toll as Wheeler[15] sees the ineffectiveness of the inspectorate as one of the reasons for the lowering of educational standards in the early 60s.

The Eastern Region Government faced similar problems with Free Universal Primary Education and had to reintroduce primary school fees after only a year of operation of the system. Wheeler[16] points out that its inspectorate seems to have been ineffective due to the inspectors' functions being divided between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Local Government with some supervision also being carried out by the Missions.

According to Burns[17] a separate inspection division was established. This re-organisation could not have been very effective as the inspectorate gets considerable criticism in the Dike[18] Report.

In 1963 a new region, the Mid-West Region, was created out of the Western Region with its own Ministry of Education and its own inspectorate division.

The inspectorate in Northern Nigeria was formed as a result of the Oldman Report[19] which recommended that primary schools should be administered by local education authorities (l.e.a.s.) and that primary inspection should be organised on a provincial basis, whilst secondary school organisation and inspection should be centralised at Kaduna. The inception and mode of working

of this inspectorate are carefully described by Jones.[20] The Northern Region Inspectorate seems to have been extremely active during its short life (1962 - 67). Twenty-five formal school inspections were completed each year, and a number of useful pamphlets were written.

In addition to the four regional inspectorates, there was also the Federal Advisory Service which started as an inspectorate in 1954, but whose functions eventually became entirely administrative. Burns[21] mentions that it carried out joint inspections with the Eastern Region Inspectorate, whilst Jones[22] points out the high degree of co-operation achieved between the Northern Region Inspectorate and the Federal Advisory Service. Awokoya[23] states that the influence of the Federal Advisory Service was extremely limited whilst acting in an inspectoral capacity, particularly prior to 1967, so that on occasions Federal Advisers were even banned for visiting certain schools.

THE CREATION OF STATES AND CURRENT EDUCATIONAL LAW

In May 1967 the former Eastern Region declared itself the Independent Republic of Biafra and it was only re-integrated as part of the Federation of Nigeria after the collapse of the Republic in January 1970 as the result of a bitter and bloody civil war. At the same time as the Eastern Region seceded, the Federal Government created twelve states each of which has now developed its own educational system. Eight years later in April, 1975 a further seven states were created by splitting up some of the large states, so that there are now (1983) a total of nineteen separate states.

One of the problems which inspectors face is of inappropriate, outdated or non-existant education law. There were few occassions where this was of significance in practice, but for example inspectors still do not appear to have right of entry into schools. An explanation of why the laws were so unclear is that between 1960 and 1967 each region set up one or more commissions to examine its educational system. The regions then revised their educational

law(which was usually still based on the 1948 Educational Ordinance) in the light of the recommendations of the commissions. In spite of all the development since the mid-60s current educational laws are often still based, in many states, on the former Educational Law of the Regions. Thus there is now a complex mixture of Education Laws throughout the country sometimes based on the laws of the Regions from 1960-67, sometimes on the laws of the larger states of 1967-1975 and sometimes on legislation relevant to the needs of the individual states after 1975. Taiwo[24] argues cogently for a Federal Edict on which State Edicts would then be based, so that individual states could make minor modifications to suit their circumstances within a general pattern common to all states. To date no such law has been promulgated.

PATTERNS OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Taiwo[25] also points out that two basic patterns of educational administration can be traced, though many variations on the theme have developed. These two basic patterns are identifiable with the two sources of the Nigerian educational system, dating back to the early years of this century when the South and North of Nigeria had separate administrations, as has been indicated by Williams.[26]

The states which were in the former Northern Region, where the Ministry of Education has always had relatively greater powers than in the South, have tended to keep their systems little changed. Traditionally in this system the Ministry retained the responsibility for secondary education, while the local education authorities were responsible for primary education. Bray[27] states that the local government reforms of 1978 onwards have increased the power of the local education authorities, so that they now bear the financial burden of Primary Education.

The Southern States, carved from the Western, Mid Western & Eastern Regions have usually created School Boards whose composition and function vary from

state to state but whose primary function is to be the manager of the schools. It is now the pattern in the south of the country for there to be a State Ministry of Education, a State School Board, a Teaching Service Commission and an office of the Federal Inspectorate of Education. Within each Ministry of Education there will usually be separate Inspectorate & Administrative Divisions. Lines of authority are not always clearly drawn and Nwankwo[28] points out that there is ample room for conflict and muddle between the various educational bodies.

THE FEDERAL INSPECTORATE

The power of the Federal Government was very limited in all fields including education prior to 1967 when Nigeria was a loose federation of powerful and autonomous regions, but after the creation of states in 1967, the power of the Federal Government relative to the states has increased remarkably.

The increase in federal power has only been made possible by the availability of finance from oil revenues, as explained by Offensend[29]. The picture of the condition of State Administrations, well described in several articles in the Quarterly Journal of Administration (January 1976), in the early 70s, is of twelve comparatively new administrations facing difficulties of finance, war damage, manpower shortages, and struggling to bring the benefits of modern government "closer to the people". Such administrations were on the whole prepared to look for leadership, finance and expertise from the Federal Government.

There is little published information on the difficulties which each of the new state governments had in creating effective administrations in the field of education and this is certainly a promising area for research. There has thus been a change in the structure of Nigeria from that of a "loose federation" to that of "Federal Supremacy", which has taken place during a period of military rule. Adebayo[30] has somewhat humorously described some of the decision

making processes used by the military rulers, which are basically dictatorial, but which probably had a wide measure of acceptance.

In the sphere of education the Federal Ministry of Education has achieved its dominant position in a number of ways which include providing finance and manpower for state projects, taking over responsibility for the running of existing institutions, and creating new organisations and institutions. One of the new institutions created was a Federal Inspectorate of Education, a body whose inception was suggested as long ago as 1951 but which actually started in April, 1973.

The formation, functions, and policies of the Federal Inspectorate have been described by Palmer[31] but it may be appropriate to point out that unlike any other previous inspectorate in Nigeria all initial inspectors received two months training, and all inspectors joining since the inception have had individual training plans worked out for them.

Relationships between Federal and State Inspectors have in general been good. Joint Conferences are held regularly. Federal inspectors have been invited to join teams of state inspectors and state inspectors have been invited to join Federal Inspections. Nonetheless, Federal and State Inspectors have different roles, with Federal Inspectors being less involved in administration and more involved with evaluation in the classroom. For example, the Interim Guidelines to Federal Inspection[32] stated that "The Federal Inspectors should be constantly in the classroom evaluating and assisting the classroom process". Federal Inspectors advise both State & Federal Ministries of Education, that is they advise management at two levels whilst State Inspectors advise only the State Ministries of Education. This is a similar comparison to that made by Kogan[33] of H.M.I. and l.e.a advisers in the United Kingdom.

The Federal Inspectorate started with a modern and realistic approach to school inspection, through careful training. It has in its early years achieved much by the encouragement and quiet persuasion of colleagues in the state inspectorates, to move them from a traditional to a modern role, as predicted by Baddeley[34] in his advice to Federal Inspectors at the start of the new inspectorate.

Birchenough[35] said that the greatest service that anyone can do is "to increase the vitality of others". This the Federal Inspectorate can claim to have done. Outside observers such as Thomas[36] have commented favourably on the system of school inspection in Nigeria, but there are still many improvements to be made particularly in the areas of primary education, curriculum development and In-service Education.

The relationship between the Federal Inspectorate and the Federal Ministry of Education, of which the Federal Inspectorate is a division, may also be of interest. It has been the policy of the Inspectorate since its inception to remain slightly separated, perhaps even aloof, from the Federal Ministry of Education. This is apparent in the provision of separate buildings, and separate titles for inspectors. In these and in many other minor issues the Federal Inspectorate's distinctive role has been emphasised. The policy of emphasising the inspectorates' independence has had both advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side the sudden transfer of inspectors to administrative or teaching posts has been successfully resisted as has the appointment of raw untrained recruits as inspectors. Such incidents have in the past been a frequent cause of a lack of quality in some state inspectorates. Also since the Federal Inspectorate inspects schools owned and run by the Federal Ministry of Education a degree of separateness to ensure impartiality was felt to be essential. Nonetheless the separation has caused problems of communication which have meant that the Federal Inspectorate has often not been successful in influencing Ministry policy and has sometimes not even known what Ministry policies were. In 1981 a fire at the Ministry Headquarters in Lagos has meant that much of the work of the Ministry of Education is now carried out at the former Federal Inspectorate Headquarters. It is possible that this very unfortunate

accident may in fact promote greater integration.

CONCLUSION

There are obvious comparisons between the roles of Federal and State Inspectors in Nigeria and the roles of H.M.I.s and l.e.a. advisors in the United Kingdom. With regard to research in this area Welton[37] has recently pointed out the lack of research being carried out on the work and the effectiveness of H.M.Is and the limited amount of research being carried out the work of l.e.a. advisors. In this he is absolutely correct but in Nigeria(to the author's knowledge) there is no current research on the work of either state or federal inspectors. Indeed there are few references even to the existence of either. For the Federal Inspectorate the following references have been found outside inspectorate conference reports and internal memoranda Adamolekun[38], Lyons and Pritchard[39], Thomas[40] and the Federal Ministry of Education[41]. There are a number of reference to the work of the regional inspectors in the mid-sixties but few give details of the work of either state or regional inspectors.

I thus conclude that there is a great deal of research to be done in the field of comparative educational administration and in particular to learn more about how different countries go about the task of school inspection. I believe that such comparisons will improve the practice of educational administration and hence the whole educational systems of countries.

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